

Dear Ms. Muench:

Thank you for your statement before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in St. Louis, Missouri, on August 15, 2003. In your statement you addressed items: (1) the Coast Guard's Maritime Domain Awareness, (2) the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study, and (3) the Missouri River Master Manual.

For approximately 1 year, the Headquarters of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard personnel, and some navigation industry representatives have attended partnering meetings in order to determine the best method to track certain dangerous cargoes on the inland waterways. This tracking information is required by the new Maritime Transportation Security Act and to continue meeting the statutory requirement of vessel operating companies reporting domestic waterborne commercial movements to the Corps. The goal is to minimize the data input burden on the towing industry while still complying with Federal law. The Corps welcomes the opportunity to work with the navigation industry and the Coast Guard to satisfy our mutual needs and concerns. We need the navigation industry's help and cooperation in sharing information on what member companies are currently doing to track their cargo movements and how these efforts might benefit a shared database that the industry, the Coast Guard, and the Corps may all access in order to obtain the information required for security and commerce reporting on our inland waterway system.

The Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Feasibility Study team has recently presented their tentative alternative plans to improve navigation efficiency.

-2-

For a detailed description of these alternatives and the decision process that will lead to the selection of a final recommended plan, please refer to the July 2003 Status Report found in the "Newsletters and Status Reports" section of the study website (<http://www2.mvr.usace.army.mil/umr-iwwsns/>). The full economic and environmental evaluations necessary to support a potential recommendation for construction of navigation improvements and implementation of ecosystem restoration measures were completed in October 2003. These tentative alternative plans were presented at a series of

public meetings in October 2003. The September 2003 study newsletter, also provided on the study's website in the "Newsletters and Status Reports" section, provides dates and locations of the public meetings. The final feasibility report is currently scheduled for completion in 2004.

Regarding the Missouri River Master Water Control Plan, the Corps has not identified a preferred alternative water control plan. The Commission has received testimony and correspondence expressing concern about proposed modifications and the potential for resulting low flows on the Mississippi River. The Corps objective in its Missouri River operations is to implement a water control plan that meets the contemporary needs of the Missouri River Basin, serves the Congressionally authorized project purposes, complies with environmental laws including the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills responsibilities to Federally recognized Tribes. There are a myriad of complex operational and resource management issues. Upriver interests want high, stable lake levels to address recreation, irrigation, and hydropower needs. Environmental interests seek a hydrograph that more closely approximates the natural hydrograph of the Missouri River. Downriver interests (below the dams) support different flow regimes for commercial navigation, flood protection, municipal water supply, and thermal generation.

The Corps is currently engaged in examining adjustments to the Modified Conservation Plan (MCP) and is conducting numerous model runs that eliminate the "fixed trigger" and "negative storage check" features of the MCP. Modeling of these adjustments to the MCP was requested by the Missouri River Basin Association (MRBA) and includes the concerns expressed

-3-

by the State of Missouri. The MRBA has indicated they have no objection to modification of the MCP alternative to eliminate these features, provided the drought storage target of 42.7 million acre-feet for a drought similar to the one experienced in the 1980's as defined in its original 1999 recommendation.

The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Don T. Riley  
Brigadier General, U.S. Army  
President Designee, Mississippi  
River Commission